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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly outlines the theory and development of Values Clarification and explores its possible applications to English as a foreign language (EFL). The five basic types of Values Clarification exercises are discussed: (1) interviewing, (2) rank-ordering, (3) forced choice, (4) values continuum, and (5) sentence completion. The theory and exercises are then examined to discover how they can decrease the student's fear of making mistakes, provide meaningful discussion topics, and increase the student's skill in using English as a tool of communication. The particular usefulness of these exercises in teaching EFL to Japanese students is considered, and suggestions are given on how to use the exercises in the EFL classroom. (Author/CFM)

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Values Clarification in EFL

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Values Clarification, an exciting innovation in modern education, has contributed some new ideas to English as a Foreign Language teaching. In the course of this paper I would like to briefly discuss the origins of Values Clarification theory, its goals and approaches, and how it can provide some solutions to the goals of EFL teaching.

VALUES CLARIFICATION – BACKGROUND AND TECHNIQUES

Values Clarification is a fairly recent arrival on the American educational scene. Developed primarily by Sidney B. Simon of the University of Massachusetts, and based on work by Louis Rath, it was created in response to low student interest in the standard school curriculum. In a move away from the traditional view of education, Values Clarification places "prime emphasis on the students' personal growth rather than merely their intellectual development." (Howe 1975: 18) The term 'values' can be interpreted as beliefs, opinions, and preferences. Values Clarification is used by elementary and high school teachers of a wide variety of subjects: history, English, science, etc.

The creators of Values Clarification chose to emphasize students' personal growth through helping students learn to (Howe 1975: 19):

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1. Choose their values freely.
2. Choose their values from alternatives.
3. Choose their values after weighing the consequences of each alternative.
4. Prize and cherish their values.
5. Share and publicly affirm their values.
6. Act upon their values.
7. Act upon their values repeatedly and consistently.

The approach to achieving these goals has several parts. First, it is felt that a sense of community, supportive and non-competitive, is important. This in turn encourages idea-sharing and risk-taking. The idea-sharing is fostered by group work and interaction. Another important part of the approach is experiential learning. Students participate in problem solving and through their experiences gain knowledge both of the subject and the process of finding solutions.

In order to put these approaches into action in the classroom, a number of exercises were developed and given the name of 'strategies.' Some of the strategies are 'one-shot' exercises which are only used once with a particular class, such as the Alligator River story outlined in Simon's *Values Clarification*. (Simon 1972: 290-294). Most of the strategies, however, can be classified into one of five basic types: interviewing, rank-ordering, forced choice, values continuum, and sentence completion. As these form the 'nuts and bolts' of Values Clarification, I would like to go into them in greater depth.

Interviewing. This strategy consists of the class interviewing one of its members. The students may ask any question they wish, but the interviewee is not obliged to answer anything he does not want to. This exercise can be used to help students find out about one another's backgrounds, and about beliefs, opinions, feelings, etc. Some samples. (Simon 1972: 140-143):

1. Did you go on a vacation this year? If you could go anywhere in the world you wanted to next year, where would you go?

2. Do you wish you had a larger family or a smaller family?
3. Do you watch TV much? How much?
4. What did you do last night?
5. Have you ever made a choice that surprised everyone?
6. What is one thing you would like to learn before you die?

Rank-ordering. This strategy requires a ranking of a number of comparable things. The ranking can be according to importance (either to the student or to society), expense, frequency of occurrence (as with hobbies), amount the student likes them, etc. The things to be ranked can be professions, hobbies, food, famous people, crimes, etc. An example of this kind of exercise could be the following:

Rank the following professions according to their social prestige. Put '1' beside the profession which in your opinion has the highest social prestige, '2' beside the second highest, and so on to '10'.

- ___ policeman
- ___ Supreme Court judge
- ___ public school teacher
- ___ author of novels
- ___ college professor
- ___ scientist
- ___ dentist
- ___ lawyer
- ___ Shinto priest
- ___ famous potter

Forced choice. In this type of strategy, students are given only a limited number of answers from which to select the one with which they agree the most. For example, a forced choice exercise could contain one or more of the following (Simon 1972: 64-65):

1. Whom would you prefer to marry? A person with
 - ___ intelligence
 - ___ personality
 - ___ sex appeal

2. Which do you think more money should be spent on?

- ___ moon shots
- ___ slum clearance
- ___ cure for cancer

3. Which would you least like to do?

- ___ listen to a Beethoven symphony
- ___ watch a debate
- ___ watch a play

4. How do you have the most fun?

- ___ alone
- ___ with a large group
- ___ with a few friends

Values Continuum. This strategy is a way to enable the students to visualize the range of opinions on a given subject. A statement concerning the subject at hand is made and put on the board. After it is on the board, each student comes and writes his initials on the line. If the topic is crime, the following could be a values continuum for that topic:

Statement: 'RAPE IS WORSE THAN BUGLARY'

Agree _____ Agree
0% _____ 100%

Incomplete Sentences. This is exactly what its name implies. The first part of a sentence is given by the teacher or one of the students, and each person completes it as he wants. Some samples (Simon 1972: 244):

- 'On vacations, I like to'
- 'I always at night.'
- 'Many people don't agree with me about'
- 'The happiest day in my life was'
- 'When I'm at home alone, I'

APPLICATION TO THE GOALS OF EFL

Many of the approaches of Values Clarification help fulfill some important goals that I have for my EFL classes. The first goal is to decrease the anxiety and embarrassment of making mistakes. A classroom is a place where students should test their understanding of English, receiving help and positive feedback. This testing process necessitates mistakes to be made, risks to be taken, on the part of the students. However, many students, particularly self-conscious ones, are afraid of seeming fools and would rather sacrifice learning than run the risk of being laughed at by the others.

A second goal, certainly a commonly shared one, is to provide for my classes meaningful, real contexts in which to use English. Grammatically-oriented texts that cheerfully and confusingly skip from one subject to another, throwing in a few strained dialogs for 'reality', leave students wondering how the structures are used in *real* communication. In trying to answer the student's need to use the grammar in meaningful contexts, the teacher often goes too far afield or chooses a subject that may be interesting only to him. Frequently the teacher becomes as strained as the textbook because he is trying to guess at what is interesting to the students.

A third goal which is closely related to the second is to provide a focus for meaningful discussions. Even when a teacher has chosen a topic of general interest, it may be too large for students to tackle, particularly in a second language. Especially abstract or slippery topics, such as the recent Lockheed scandal in Japan, can overwhelm students unless there is a handle they can grasp. Narrowing the discussion down to one small manageable area avoids the heavy, anxious silence which often greets an overly open discussion topic.

Throughout the above goals my fourth objective constantly emerges. This is acquiring a grasp of how English works as a tool of communication. Wanting to express a feeling or idea, students are often bewildered as to which of the grammatically correct structures best communicates their exact position. Even when there is no anxiety on the part of the student, there can be confusion as to how to present his ideas best. Learning that the comparative

structure communicates exactly his idea of 'rape is worse than burglary' is learning how to operate the tool of English. It is more than learning grammatical correctness; it is grasping the way to use the grammar to express ideas. When a student says, for example, that 'being a dentist is better for your life than being a Shinto priest,' he soon discovers through questionings that this statement does *not* express his real opinion that 'being a dentist is more financially secure than being a Shinto priest.' An understanding of how to manipulate the language to convey your ideas correctly and clearly is thus an important skill to acquire.

My last goal is one which applies primarily to the Japanese students I have been teaching for some years. This goal I have entitled 'learning the Western argumentation process.' Japanese in particular freeze at the thought of expressing their feelings in a large group. As they are born and raised in a society that teaches them to avoid open conflict, this behavior is not surprising. However, if these same students are going to the United States or England, or will have to deal with Westerners in Japan, they will be interacting with people brought up on the idea of arguing and discussing as ways to knowledge. More simply, Westerners love to talk, disagree, convince, even if the only thing at issue is whether it will rain the next day. In the realm of politics, disagreements can become heated, statements vehement. Based on the observation of Westerners conversing, the general Japanese consensus is that foreigners are often angry at each other. Even the business manager of our school who has daily contact with Americans commented to this effect during his first trip to the U.S. "I'm amazed," he said after a few days of eaves-dropping and observation, "at how upset everyone is all the time. People seem so intense and forceful about everything!"

Of course, the truth of the matter is somewhat different from the Japanese conception. Westerners not only like the process of arguing, they are expected to engage in it. An American who seldom expresses an opinion is usually regarded as 'wishy-washy', or at least not very interesting. Teaching Japanese to see arguing as Westerners themselves see it takes much more than a simple statement of fact. Moreover, if it's a skill the students will need,

they must practice it. In Western business dealings and social situations, Japanese will run the risk of having the expression of their ideas frustrated unless they know how to present and defend them. They might also be deemed 'not interesting' or 'wishy-washy', false and sad judgments which will block cross-cultural understanding. Since the Japanese will be functioning in English, they will be expected to be able, and should be able, to argue forcefully and according to the Western style.

These, then are the goals I have for my EFL classes. A comparison of the approaches of Values Clarification with these goals shows how compatible they can be. A sense of community can provide the support and warmth necessary to decrease students' anxieties. The positive feelings from working together and sharing ideas creates an atmosphere of trust where students are not laughed at for making mistakes. On the contrary, the student who makes a mistake is helped by the others. The helpers thus learn themselves from the mistake, and the fear of risk-taking is decreased for all as they see how mistakes can be a positive learning experience.

One way Values Clarification builds this sense of community is by fostering students' curiosity about others. The interviewing technique in particular is utilized for this. All of the strategies, however, encourage the idea-sharing and risk-taking that are part of a sense of community.

As to providing meaningful contexts for using English, Values Clarification can be a great aid in filling this gap. The approach of experiential learning as well as the overall emphasis on students' values opens up a huge, unlimited mine of discussion topics. Talking about your own ideas and beliefs, and learning others', are always real and meaningful situations for which language is the medium. The teacher constantly searching for interesting topics is usually trying to bring *in* those subjects, not realizing that a wealth of ideas lies in the people in the classroom. Values Clarification provides strategies like a rank ordering to encourage this experiential learning and examination of personal ideas. Thus, if a class has completed a unit on talking about jobs, by providing the exercise on professions described on page 132, the teacher can give a real context in which to use the material just studied. All of the strategies can be used to fill

the 'reality' gap precisely because they were all designed for making the students' interests the subject of the class.

In addition, the strategies by their very nature help to provide the focus which prevents a topic from being overwhelming. A strategy can give a smaller unit to talk about, and the conversation can go as far into abstracts as the students can handle or want to go. For example, a values continuum such as the one below allows the students to narrow their discussion to how they feel about one aspect of, in this case, the Lockheed scandal.

Statement: 'The government should publicize the names of everyone involved in taking bribes.'

Agree _____	Agree
0%	100%

If there is interest, students will ask others why they feel as they do. No matter how little or how far they take it — whether they stop after having placed themselves on the line or continue into the connection between big business and government, conflict of interests, etc. — the students are responding to and dealing with a small clear question. If the discussion continues beyond the initial exercise and becomes too confused, everyone can be brought back to the original focus and work through the steps that brought them to the confusing point. Usually the confusion can be worked out and the discussion can continue.

Through the discussions, students are constantly learning how English works, reaching for the structures and words that most clearly express their ideas. From the confusion that often results when they select inappropriate words and structures, they learn the usage of the English they have studied. They also are learning to wield English like a tool. If properly used, it helps in the communication process. Thus students begin to move away from the study of the inner mechanisms of this tool, what its component parts are, to how the tool actually works 'on the job.' While the first is necessary knowledge, it is useless unless they have the practical experience of using it. In the communication of ideas and

opinions, students can gain this practical on-the-job experience.

The goal of teaching Japanese students the Western argumentation process is clearly an area in which Values Clarification strategies can be of great help. Since Values Clarification strategies demand that you 'choose, prize, and act on' values *publicly*, they provide a natural method for practicing this skill. As an example of how this occurs, let's look at the rank-ordering exercise on professions again. After the students have individually ranked the profession, the teacher pairs them up and asks them to create a third ranking that the pair agrees on *and can explain their reasons for* to the rest of the class. In explaining their original choices to each other and trying to reach a mutual decision on a new ranking, they perforce must disagree, convince, argue, etc. Each has to try to make the other see his viewpoint and must listen to the other's. As they have to explain their reasoning to the rest of the class later, a clear understanding of their mutual position has to be clearly defined, point by point.

All of the strategies demand open assertion of opinions. Japanese, on the whole, are uncomfortable with this. By participating in these exercises, they gradually lose their reticence and learn how to approach a controversial topic with Western openness and logic. They learn to put together a series of reasons to show others the basis of their opinions. An important contribution of the teacher to the achievement of this goal is the explanation of the necessity of learning this skill. Once students understand the importance of knowing how to present their ideas in a way Westerners can grasp, they willingly try to achieve this objective.

SUCCESS

While I have no clinically objective evidence for the success of Values Clarification strategies in achieving the goals I have discussed, several subjective observations lead me to believe that they are successful.

First, in classes where I have used a great deal of Values Clarification strategies, the students are much less inhibited about expressing their ideas. Many of the discussions begun in class have

been continued in the halls and lounge. Students often approach teachers and other students to find out their beliefs on a particular topic. Second, in class all students have increased their participation in class discussions, and have exhibited greater clarity of expression. They have also become more direct in responding to other students' statements of ideas, and more logical in their arguments when they disagree. Third, the classes have grown more independent, ignoring me as a teacher unless I as a person have something specific to contribute to the discussion. I feel that directly linked to this independence is the students' greater confidence in their ability to use English well. Each discussion seems to bring a better grasp of how the language operates, and thus less reliance on the teacher. I personally view this as positive, and thus see it as a mark of the success of Values Clarification strategies.

SUGGESTIONS

In concluding this paper, I would like to discuss a few suggestions based on my own experience with Values Clarification exercises.

First, if you choose to use these strategies, insist upon a supportive and warm atmosphere. Nothing destroys the effectiveness more than laughter at someone or failure to listen closely and openly. Any student who tries to be overbearing and contemptuous must be dealt with firmly. At first, I am the one to request a student to act more pleasantly, but gradually this function is taken over by the students themselves.

Secondly, I have found these exercises an excellent way to learn and practice 'courtesy' phrases. These are such phrases as:

'I see your point, but on the other hand . . .'

'Actually, . . . (dentists don't make more money than lawyers.)'

'I agree with you completely.'

'I can't quite agree with you. As I see it, . . .'

These are a few of the natural English argumentative phrases that can aid tremendously in setting a positive tone in a discussion. For any student who wants to be able to control the impression he

makes, a mastery of how to use such phrases would be a boon. The talking that grows out of Values Clarification exercises is a perfect place for the practice of these sort of phrases.

Many other thoughts on the use of Values Clarification can be found in books on the subject, a few of which are listed in the bibliography. It is my hope that this paper has contributed some ideas that will be of use in your EFL classes.

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